

Preventing genital irritation and urinary tract infections in children and young children



Doncaster and Bassetlaw
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

These simple measures are to help parents and carers to reduce the factors that are known to cause genital irritation and to prevent urinary tract infections (water infection) in children.

Encourage fluid intake

Drinking plenty of fluids will reduce the concentration of urine and makes it less irritating to the child's urinary passages. It will also reduce the concentration of bacteria in the urine and this reduces the likelihood of infection of the urinary system. Please encourage drinking water and squash (sugar-free) rather than sugary and carbonated drinks.

Avoid constipation

The colon (the last part of the bowel) is located behind the bladder and constipation causes 'loading' of the colon (the colon becomes full of faeces). A loaded colon can cause blockage to the urinary outflow from the bladder, which contributes to the risk of infection, as urine remains in the bladder longer than normal due to the pressure from the full bowel.

Proper wiping of the genital area

Wiping the genitalia should be directed from front to back to prevent bacteria from the anal area being carried to the urethra. These bacteria are responsible for infections in this area, including urinary tract infections. Children should be encouraged to wipe until clean and must wash their hands afterwards.

Avoid bubble bath/bath bombs and the use of strong soap

If used when bathing, bubble bath/bath bombs and strong soap can irritate the genital area and cause inflammation of the genital tissues. They can also produce symptoms that mimic urinary tract infections. Any inflammation and congestion can lead to secondary infection.



Double micturition after urination

This means passing urine twice before leaving the toilet. When the child passes the first volume of urine, they should remain seated for about one minute before leaving the toilet. This is to get rid of any residual urine and prevent stagnation of urine in the bladder. Stagnation is often the primary problem that causes infection.

Avoid withholding urine and aim to empty bladder frequently and regularly during daytime.

Withholding (stopping themselves from going to the toilet) often happens when the child is busy playing, and should be discouraged. This should prevent stagnation of urine. Please encourage your child to go to the toilet frequently. If the child is of school age, they should be encouraged to go to the toilet at each break to prevent disruption/accidents in class.

Avoid irritant underwear

Cotton rather than nylon underwear is preferred and for girls cotton rather than nylon tights whenever possible. Tight underwear should also be avoided. Children should be encouraged to change their underwear daily - more often if accidents occur.

Other possible causes of irritation to the genital area and urinary symptoms:

- Oestrogen levels - are lower in girls aged 3-8 years'. In some girls, this could lead to dryness, irritation, and discharge. This dryness involves the urethral area and may cause frequency and pain on passing water (dysuria). Treatment includes the use of prescribed moisturising agents.
- Threadworm infection - the worms tend to crawl from the anal area mainly at night and can cause irritation, which in turn may cause scratching, irritation, pain on passing water (dysuria), and frequency. These will be considered by your GP or the Consultant caring for your child and can be diagnosed by a simple sellotape test. Nails should be clean and cut short because children scratch unintentionally, in their sleep. Long nails tend to cause more irritation and can spread the eggs of the worms or cause re-infection.

- Poor personal hygiene - not paying attention to washing and drying themselves properly can lead to smelling of stale urine and potentially to further infection, which in turn may lead to your child being bullied at school. Children are often in a rush and may not wipe themselves properly or may not change damp pants. They should be given a small supply of clean underwear and toilet tissue to take to school or have to hand in their own bathroom at home to reduce embarrassment and to allow your child to feel in control of being clean. Often the children tell us school toilets are not great or they do not have enough time to go at break because of the queue. This needs to be discussed with your child, and if need be with the school to make suitable adjustments to assist your child with his/her needs.

If problems persist, please seek help from your GP or your child's consultant.

Doncaster Royal Infirmary

Children's Ward. Tel: 01302 642774

Children's Observation Unit. Tel: 01302 642781

Children's Outpatient Department. Tel: 01302 642683.

Bassetlaw Hospital

Children's Ward. Tel: 01909 572284

Outpatient Department. Tel: 01909 500990.

Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)

The team are available to help with any concerns, complaints or questions you may have about your experience at the Trust. Their office is in the Main Foyer (Gate 4) of Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Contact can be made either in person, by telephone or email.

The contact details are:

Telephone: 01302 642764 or 0800 028 8059

Email: dbth.pals.dbh@nhs.net

[illegible]